

Sunday Best

PETER LINEHAM

Sunday Best

How the Church Shaped New Zealand
and New Zealand Shaped the Church



MASSEY UNIVERSITY PRESS

School children play outside the Catholic Church of St Mary's, built in Manuka Street, Nelson, in 1856 and destroyed by fire in 1881. The school was established by the first priest, Fr Antoine Garin, and had a high reputation with Protestants and also ensured an ecumenical atmosphere in the town. COURTESY MICHAEL GRAHAM-STEWART



To Allan Davidson,
friend and collaborator
over many years



Contents

Introduction

page 10

1

The Sacred Day

page 26

2

The House of God

page 48

3

Gathered to Worship

page 100

4

The Music and Words of Faith

page 134

5

Clergy Culture

page 168

6

Convictions of the Faithful

page 198

7

The Money in the Bag

page 224

8

**A Sociable
Religion**

page 242

9

**The
Gendered
Church**

page 274

10

**Children
and Young
People
and Church**

page 308

11

**Status,
Hierarchy
and Faith**

page 338

12

All Change

page 378

Glossary

page 386

Notes

page 390

Index

page 450

**About
the Author**

page 462





Introduction

Previous The Church Missionary Society church at Tūranga (Gisborne) in 1852, showing the reading desk with Māori reader, and the pulpit with a Māori clergyman. This, the second chapel (sometimes known as Manutuke) at Tūranga was erected from 1849 by Māori, and used traditional panels with simple manaia motifs. It was 45 ft by 90 ft (13.7 m x 27.4 m) in size and was an interesting blend of European and Māori styles. ALEXANDER TURNBULL
LIBRARY. REF: B-051-017

NEW ZEALAND WAS ONE of the last countries in the world to be settled, with Māori probably not arriving from the islands in the centre of the Pacific until about 1300. By the time of initial European contact (Abel Tasman in 1642, James Cook in 1769), tribal groups were established along the coast of all of the North Island and some of the cooler South Island. When Samuel Marsden, the Church of England chaplain for the Australian prison colony, persuaded the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to commence a mission in New Zealand, there was already some contact between Māori and Europeans. But the mission, which began in December 1814 with a Christmas Day service, was the first permanent settlement of Europeans.

Missionary work of this kind was a very new approach in the 1810s. Voluntary Protestant missionary societies were first established in the 1790s, and they had little experience of how to choose successful missionaries and what their goals should be. New Zealand was an experiment. The CMS mission of three lay missionaries and their support staff was confined to the Bay of Islands, and had very unstable beginnings. There were no converts until 1826, by which time half of the early missionaries had been sacked by the mission. The appointment of Henry and Marianne Williams in 1823, followed by Henry's brother William and his wife Jane, stabilised the mission, and from 1823 it was a strong presence in more and more Māori communities.

In 1822 the Wesleyans arrived, and they began to establish a mission station at Whangaroa to the north of the Bay of Islands. Whangaroa was the site of an 1809 massacre in which the sailors on the *Boyd* were killed and eaten after insults to Māori on board the ship, and in 1827 Wesleydale was attacked and had to be abandoned. The Wesleyan missionaries established a new mission the following year at Mangungu on the Hokianga harbour, on the west coast of Northland. In 1838 it was agreed that the Wesleyans would expand down the west coast as far as Taranaki and in the South Island, while the CMS would expand down the east coast and then around and up the coast as far as Wanganui.

The CMS was a vastly bigger mission than the Wesleyans, but Henry Williams had been cautious about expanding its operations. He built a boat, the *Active*, and preferred to use this to make briefer visits to the Bay of Plenty, while the mission consolidated in various sites around the Bay of Islands, and inland at Waimate North. The turning point came in the 1830s, as numbers increased at the services held by the mission, and converts sought baptism and received portions of the Bible that from 1835 were translated into Māori and published for the mission by William Colenso. Still, the number baptised was deliberately selective, as the mission sought to insist on attested evangelical conversions. There were extensions of the mission to the Bay of Plenty and Waikato from 1835, and in 1840 to the East Coast and the

Waikanae and Ōtaki area of the south of the North Island.

In 1838 Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pompallier and a very small team arrived in New Zealand as part of the Catholic plan to use the Society of Mary to plant Catholicism in the western Pacific. A very different strategy of baptisms and extensive travel created two very different kinds of Christian mission.

The CMS worked closely with the British government's emissaries in the arrival of the British resident, James Busby, in 1833, the Declaration of Independence by the northern tribes arranged by the British in 1835, and the annexation of New Zealand and the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. But these attempts to control the settlement of New Zealand by Pākehā and to protect Māori had a long-term effect on the mission. From 1840 Māori focused on political issues, and did not need the mission to help them: the various missions remained significant to Māori, but not essential.

The missionaries remained vigilant about the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi and were increasingly critical of the British government's changing policies about Māori land. Their role was made more complex by the arrival of a bishop appointed by the British government: George Augustus Selwyn, the very epitome of muscular Christianity. Selwyn was not well received by the CMS missionaries, who valued their independence. Serving as a member of the governor's council, Selwyn supported Governor Grey's decision to attack the mission's land purchases when they opposed his land policies, and he advised the mission to abandon these purchases. Henry Williams, unlike most of the missionaries, declined to give up his land (aware of his family's needs and convinced of his own integrity) and the tragic result was that the bishop advised the CMS to dismiss him. The consequence for the credibility of the mission was massive.

The land wars of the 1860s were a further development of the strategy of securing Māori land, this time by the newly established settler government, which manipulated the governors. Missionary protests about this were real, and Selwyn was equal in these protests. But Māori had increasingly decided, on the basis of a reading of the Old Testament by Wiremu Tāmihana (a great Māori Anglican), that they needed to become an independent people. The King Movement was a profound challenge to British government legitimacy, and the mission was bound to choose the British side; for safety's sake it had to evacuate almost all of its mission fields. There were tragic consequences: Bishop Selwyn became a military chaplain and was wrongly accused of being present at massacres in Rangiaowhia in 1864. One of the missionaries, Carl Sylvanus Volkner, returning to his station in Ōpōtiki in 1865, was accused by the invading Kīngitanga troops of being a spy for the British (which was true enough) and was killed.

During the wars, a former Wesleyan turned prophet, Te Ua Haumēne, created

Pai Mārire or Hauhau, a movement that brought together Christian and traditional themes, and identified Māori with Israel. In 1867 Te Kooti Arikirangi was accused of spying for the rebels while fighting on the British side and was sent to the Chatham Islands. Here he had a series of visions, and later led his followers back to the East Coast, where in dramatic circumstances he disrupted the settler world and created a spiritual movement based on Old Testament karakia (prayers), which became what we know as Ringatū. In Taranaki another prophetic political movement developed at Parihaka under Te Whiti o Rongomai. In November 1881 Parihaka was invaded by 1600 armed constables who arrested the prophet and many of his followers, who responded with passive non-resistance.

Meanwhile the Māori Anglican Church was re-established gradually, by a small group of missionaries and some Māori ordained priests, especially in the territories of Ngāti Porou on the East Coast, which had been staunchly kūpapa (supporters of the British government) during the wars. The Catholic mission, which had anyway weakened when Pompallier fell out with the Marists, was re-established by a new Catholic religious order, the Mill Hill Fathers, and a number of nuns including Suzanne Aubert in Meeanee, Hiruhārama (Jerusalem) and elsewhere. The Wesleyan mission and a new Presbyterian mission also worked in the central North Island, but the Māori population and the number of churchgoers had dropped hugely.

No great recovery in Māori Christianity occurred until Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana had a spiritual vision on his farm south of Wanganui in 1918. For a while he led a team from many churches in encouraging Māori back into a new spiritual covenant, but tensions within these churches over control led the movement to secede and create its own independent Rātana Church in 1925. The net effect of these trends was that the Māori churches were by and large on a very different trajectory to the European churches, and therefore can be covered in only a limited way in this study.

OVER THESE YEARS THE denominations of churches became organised in New Zealand as independent bodies. Their organisation and structures matured into national bodies, and they created local congregations or parishes across the whole country. There is a rich literature on the formation and development of these denominations. Since this book is focused on the story at the local level, some background on the formation and character of each denomination is required.

The stories of the major denominations are all complex in different ways. Given that New Zealand was a British colony, the Anglican story was the key one. The Church of England was one of the national branches of the Catholic Church

which broke away in the sixteenth century Reformation (notoriously, the result of Henry VIII's many marriages). It retained more remnants of Catholicism (bishops, vestments, liturgy, parishes) than any other Protestant church, but in the end the Church of England was subject to the Houses of Parliament as a state body. During the next three centuries it was an important instrument of the state and not allowed to choose its own bishops, while parish priests were mostly chosen by lay patrons. Bishop Selwyn had to figure out how to turn a state church into a working New Zealand denomination. Various attempts to get permissive legislation from the British parliament failed, and so the solution was an act of voluntary compact, agreed by lay and clergy leaders (all of them Europeans) at St Stephen's Chapel in Auckland in 1857.

Defining Anglicanism as based on using the Book of Common Prayer prepared by Archbishop Cranmer in 1552 and revised in 1662, and accepting the Thirty-nine Articles of Faith, the church as envisaged by Selwyn reformed many of the inconsistencies of English Anglicanism, thus modelling what a truly national church ought to look like. It also restored a system of self-government in which bishops were answerable to synods and a periodic General Synod which comprised elected laymen, clergy and the bishop from each diocese. Those dioceses (Christchurch, Nelson, Wellington, Waiapu and Auckland, which was the remnant of the original Diocese of New Zealand) initially had Crown-appointed bishops. Dunedin was created later in a poor exercise of authority by Selwyn out of the southern part of the Christchurch Diocese; the bishop he allowed to be ordained was unacceptable to Dunedin lay people, and was forced to resign his office.

The New Zealand church, unlike the Australian church, was relatively consistent in its style of Anglicanism. At this time Anglicans in Britain were moving in several divergent directions, one group strongly evangelical (and initially represented in New Zealand by supporters of the CMS and by the Diocese of Waiapu, which was highly dependent on the CMS for most of its clergy, and who ministered to Māori), and another that was affected by the Oxford Movement, which had emerged in England in the 1830s and sought to revive the Catholic traditions of the church (a movement for which Selwyn had some sympathy).

Anglicans showed a gradual trend towards more Catholic ceremony, although the Nelson Diocese reacted sharply against this and became an evangelical diocese. And in the Diocese of Waikato, carved out of the southern part of the Auckland Diocese in 1926, Bishop Carrington was unsuccessful in his efforts to push it in a strongly Catholic direction. The Anglican Church was a relatively middle-of-the-road body. Bishops were mostly appointed from England until the 1960s. The Māori Church had longed for its own bishop, fitting the original vision of the CMS, but only

in 1928 was a Māori Bishop of Aotearoa appointed, and he was a bishop without a diocese, dependent on the willingness of other bishops to allow him to have any role. In 1992 the General Synod of the Anglican Church adopted a new constitution, Te Pouhere, by which the church was separated into three parallel tikanga — Pākehā, Māori and Polynesian — each with its own bishops, meeting only at General Synod. In recent years it has also had three presiding primates.

The Presbyterian Church has an even more complex story. Presbyterians were shaped by John Calvin's vision of the Reformation, in which bishops and priests were replaced by elders (the 'presbytery', or meeting of elders), and biblical justification was sought for all church practices. John Knox made this form of church part of the Scottish way of life and, after bitter struggles with England, the state church of Scotland. Given the demand for biblical justifications, there were frequent schisms from the state church, and the largest of these happened in 1843 when the 'evangelical party' (those more committed to Bible-based reform) created a new Free Church, insisting that each congregation should select its own minister.

A congregation of the state Church of Scotland was formed by the Rev. John Macfarlane at the first Wakefield settlement of Wellington in 1840 (this was the first church in Wellington). The first significant group of Scots came with the settlement in Otago in 1848, and was commenced in the name of the Free Church. So the Otago church was very determined to maintain strong reformed and biblical principles, and the settlement remained a tiny enclave until gold was found at Gabriel's Gully in Otago in 1861.

In 1862 the Presbyterian congregations throughout the colony met in Auckland and agreed to create a system of presbyteries (regional bodies with authority over local congregations) and an annual General Assembly with supreme authority over the church. Unfortunately, a few months later, when the Presbyterians of Otago heard of the more liberal trends in the northern Presbyterian congregations, they became alarmed and formed the Synod of Otago and Southland, which remained separate from the national Presbyterian Church. Since this part of the church had many more resources and a theological training plan, this was a massive obstacle for Presbyterianism. Only in 1901, when the southern Presbyterians had accepted the use of organs and hymns, did they enter the united church. The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand began as a very strong force in New Zealand, considering the relative sizes of the Church of Scotland and the Church of England in the United Kingdom.

The Catholic Church in New Zealand began with the Vatican's establishment of a Vicariate of the Western Pacific, and Bishop Pompallier, with wide responsibilities for the islands north of New Zealand, worked with the newly founded Society of Mary, based in France. The Catholic Church had been profoundly affected by the

schisms of the Reformation, and in the Council of Trent (held in three sessions between 1545 and 1563) had revised and clarified many aspects of church life. So the ‘tridentine’ Latin Mass, the central service of the church, was defined, religious orders were restructured, and the training of priests in seminaries was introduced. The next reforms took place in 1870 while New Zealand was a colony, at the First Vatican Council, when the infallibility of the pope was declared a fundamental doctrine of the faith. The First Vatican Council in 1870 inspired the creation of the separatist Catholic school system, since Protestantism and secular society were viewed in a very negative way.

Traditionally, religious orders had a high degree of independence, and the missionaries of the Society of Mary grew very discontented at Pompallier’s imperious and lavish style, and petitioned the Vatican for a new regime. They were satisfied in 1850 with the creation of the Diocese of Wellington, which covered the whole of New Zealand south of Lake Taupō. The French Marist priests were largely withdrawn from their Māori ministries, and placed in parishes ministering to European settlers, most of them Irish. Pompallier had to recruit ‘secular’ priests, who were not members of religious orders. He also brought the Sisters of Mercy to Auckland, and this order became the largest of the numerous female orders which attached themselves to dioceses.

Once Pompallier was replaced, the Diocese of Auckland had bishops from a striking range of traditions: Irish, English and New Zealand secular and Benedictine bishops. The Marists were very strong in Wellington and in the later Christchurch Diocese, while the Dunedin Diocese had a very strong secular Irish tradition in its bishops, and a high profile in hostility to the Protestant majority in Otago and in New Zealand as a whole. There were small minorities of other nationalities in the church, including Germans at Pūhoi and Italians in Wellington, but New Zealand — unlike Australia — welcomed relatively few southern European Catholic migrants after World War II. Thus the New Zealand church remained dominated by Irish Catholics, and dependent on Irish clergy and nuns.

The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s shook the church in New Zealand as elsewhere, and parishes and religious orders were transformed, while the church struggled to recruit priests and nuns for its work.

Methodism was a movement to bring the people of Britain to a personal experience of faith, which began through the preaching of John Wesley and others in the eighteenth century. The Church of England was very suspicious of it, even though Wesley was a devout Anglican priest, but the state allowed the movement to continue, and it flourished in some parts of England and in America. After Wesley’s death it split into several groups, the largest of which called itself the Wesleyans.

It was the Wesleyans that sent missionaries to New Zealand from 1822, but the Primitive Methodists sent preachers in 1840, and two other small Methodist denominations also established a modest presence here.

Initially the Australasian Wesleyan churches as a group were granted independence by the British Wesleyan Conference, but the New Zealand Methodists, who were enjoying rapid growth, were not happy under Australian control. When the merger with the Primitive Methodists of New Zealand took place in 1913, the New Zealand Conference became independent at the same time. But by then rapid growth had ceased, and Methodists struggled with competing pressures from liberal and evangelical forces, which resulted in 1999 in the separation of the more evangelical members into the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Since the 1970s the strongest forces in Methodism have come from migrants from Tonga, Samoa and other parts of the Pacific, but some of these have formed Samoan and Tongan denominations rather than join the New Zealand Methodist Church.

Members of other British denominations also established congregations in New Zealand wherever numbers made this practical, but this mostly restricted them to the cities. The Congregationalist Independents, descendants of the Nonconformists or Dissenters who had been expelled from the Church of England in 1662, had made an impact among the urban middle class of England but gained only a small foothold in New Zealand, perhaps because few of the middle class migrated to this country. Similarly, Baptists had few separate congregations in the nineteenth century but their numbers grew rapidly, taking advantage of an evangelical surge, from the middle of the twentieth century. These denominations had very weak central structures, and struggled to develop a national network.

The Salvation Army was only founded in the late nineteenth century in England under General William Booth, but when two missionaries were sent to Dunedin they made a very dramatic initial impact, especially among the poor. There were other denominations among ethnic minorities (for example, German and Scandinavian Lutherans) and with particular emphases, including Quakers, Churches of Christ and Brethren. Overall the smaller denominations amounted to just 5 per cent of the total population. Many of their lay members did well in New Zealand, however, and their denominations often reflected trends in the mainstream of church life, and so a few of their stories will also be found in this book.

Pentecostalism is often traced to the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles in 1906, but it reached New Zealand through British preachers in the 1920s. Then, in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a huge burst of interest in Pentecostal phenomena, especially speaking in tongues, within mainstream denominations. The result was the charismatic movement, which attracted many young people — indeed

virtually a whole generation of Protestant young people and many Catholics as well. Some remained in the mainstream churches but many others joined Pentecostal denominations, and those churches were evolving. Increasingly, large mega-churches, with very strong leaders, became the feature of this movement.

From 1901 there were increasing calls for some kind of unification of the various denominations in New Zealand, reflecting broader world trends. In a land with a small population the duplication of churches seemed an extravagance. In many communities the first church had been a joint Protestant community church; the denominational range increased with the population. Then in 1901 the Presbyterians became a single denomination, and in 1913 so did the Methodists, and ideas of a single evangelical Protestant denomination circulated at this time. These discussions slowly developed, especially between Presbyterians and Methodists. The formation of the National Council of Churches in 1941 also increased denominational cooperation, embracing all the larger Protestant churches. Then in 1965 the Joint Commission of Church Union, embracing five of the larger Protestant denominations (not Catholics, Baptists or the Salvation Army), began discussions for union. The plan would have succeeded but for Anglican caution, which led to the withdrawal of the Anglican Church in 1976 and the collapse of the proposal.

Since then many church people and churches, including the Catholic Church after the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, have cooperated on a range of activities. People have moved more freely between denominations, but the denominations themselves have stopped seeking organisational unity, and have concentrated on the significant decline in membership which all have experienced. Meanwhile the National Council of Churches was replaced in 1987 by the Council of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Catholic Church joined, but the Baptist Union did not. In 2006 the council was closed down after other denominations withdrew their support. Various bodies — including one of church leaders, the evangelical New Zealand Christian Network (which arose out of the Evangelical Fellowship of New Zealand) and a series of Vision congresses — have been established, while in 2016 Anglicans, Methodists and Catholics attempted to create a new ecumenical body.

IN THE HISTORY OF the churches in New Zealand one issue that assumes central importance, although it is largely irrelevant in the context of this book, is the lack of a formal link with the state. Bishop Selwyn had been appointed by letters patent, the normal mode of British Crown appointments, and in his case one in which the Queen took a real interest. It was intended that the bishop would organise the provision of the Church of England in the Crown colony, including



The laying of the foundation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Moxham Avenue, Hataitai (or Kilbirnie), Wellington, in 1896. The church was part of the Wellington circuit, where Josiah Ward was the main minister, and he is probably the speaker while Mrs Ward is seated at the harmonium. The church seated 100 people and was built beside the state school for the sum of £39.15 using donated materials. ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY. REF: 1/2-075654-F

the work of the CMS missionaries, the provision of chaplaincy to the British forces and the creation of parishes for the settler community. The position of the bishop was therefore financed one-third by the CMS, one-third by the Colonial Office and one-third by one of the inter-diocesan Anglican organisations, the Society for the Promotion of the Gospel.

Part of the bishop's function was to solicit clergy and funds for the establishment of local churches, since the Anglican government had ceased to provide this kind of support since 1829, when the British state had opened its doors to Nonconformist Protestants who were not part of the state church, and to Roman Catholics. New Zealand was founded at a time when the state role in supporting Anglicanism was significantly less than it had been in either Australia or in the South African British colonies. Relative neutrality was urged by some of the Governor's Council, but Selwyn was also on that executive and expected some degree of state support. This primarily consisted of the provision of land for building churches of all denominations. A scheme to support clergy of all denominations was opposed by Selwyn and negated in England.

The later stages of the separation of church and state awaited the advent of the settler parliament in 1854, when the members refused to recognise the military chaplain as the chaplain to the parliament, insisting on perfect equality of all denominations but requiring the speaker to open each day by reading a Christian prayer. This remains the situation. A year later the settler government declined to take over the share of Bishop Selwyn's salary previously paid by the Colonial Office.

In 1877, when the parliament turned its attention to a compulsory system of primary education, it insisted that this education must be non-sectarian, and the strongest protests against this were not Anglican but Catholic. Attempts to get non-sectarian Bible readings and prayer into the curriculum over later years failed, the final attempt interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. Instead, a scheme of voluntary classes on a non-sectarian basis during the first half-hour of the school day became an informal, and later formal, system when approved by the school committee. This curious expedient — the living proof that no grand principle underlay the decision — remains a source of tension to this day. Meanwhile the Catholics' demand for support for their system finally, in 1975, led to integration into the state system with some reserved rights for the proprietor, and today's education system is looser than that in the nineteenth century.

So the state remained interconnected with the churches, but its attitude to these links varied somewhat in different periods. During the world wars, the state encouraged the churches to cooperate in providing chaplains for the army serving overseas in large numbers. During the era of the Cold War in the 1950s, the church

here as in America was sometimes described as essential to the fabric of Western values. Just why the state used the church in this way is outside the scope of this book. Instead this study focuses on the neglected role played by the church in society.

The churches have campaigned for many causes, the obvious ones including making religious education a compulsory subject (or, in the Catholic case, gaining state support for their separate educational system); the attempt to ban the use of alcohol; attempts to help the poor, women, refugees and those with disabilities; and campaigns against eugenics, prostitution, abortion, nuclear arms, rugby games with South Africa, and refugee quotas. In many cases a minority of the churches joined in these campaigns, and often they allied with other groups. The particulars of these crusades have been explored by Laurie Guy in his fine book *Shaping Godzone*.¹ The subject of this book is less the crusades and more the style of the church as a crusader — sometimes a reluctant one. It is about the Christian values and community experience that provoked activism.

A final theme that is not the subject of this book is the way in which the churches have experienced decline among their traditional supporters, and a rise in their attraction of new migrants. Church involvement had never been a high priority to most New Zealanders. Although until 1971 more than 89 per cent of the population professed a Christian denominational link on their census form, church attendance came nowhere near such figures. From 1971 the figures declined rapidly to 76 per cent in 1981, just over 60 per cent in 1996, 52 per cent in 2006, and 46 per cent in 2013. The age distribution of this religious adherence strongly suggests that the decline will continue as older people, with their higher levels of adherence, pass away.

Although European and Māori numbers have declined, the rapid change in New Zealand's ethnic distribution has created new concentrations of religious adherence. In particular, Pacific peoples, who have come to New Zealand in large numbers since the 1950s, have much higher levels of nominal religious adherence and regular attendance at church. Although this now seems to be declining, some denominations, notably the Methodist Church, are now dependent on Pasifika people. The migration of Europeans has diversified the Catholic Church and brought groups of Dutch people into the Presbyterian Church, but had little effect on other Anglo-Saxon Protestant denominations. The increase in Asian migration from the 1990s has mostly aided the growth of other religions, notably Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, but it has also brought large numbers of mainland Chinese who have been subject to generations of anti-religious propaganda. Koreans and Filipinos have strong Christian affiliations, and this has been very significant for the Catholic Church in particular. Suggestions of how this has changed the culture of the churches are explored at the end of most chapters, but much remains to be seen or to be researched.

ALL THE FACTORS MENTIONED above are legitimately part of church history, but my concern is about what church people believed, and the way in which their churches cohered and touched their lives and their communities. The ambitious hope of this book is to unlock this largely forgotten story.

To do so, it is necessary to go beyond an examination of one denomination. Certainly a collective story suppresses some of the extreme ends of the story. There was a vast difference in the experience of religion between a Catholic parishioner and the member of a Salvation Army Corps. I have sought to incorporate aspects of the culture right across the spectrum, but individual denominational and even congregational stories need to be told. Moreover, the book may create an impression that there was a long century of relatively unchanging church culture, followed by very rapid change. History rarely happens like that, but the book is undoubtedly centred on ‘the world that was lost’. Again, the details look different within each denomination; undoubtedly, for example, church morning teas follow denominational trends, as do the changing patterns of prayer.

Sunday Best seeks to provide a narrative of overall trends, but the shrewd reader will soon identify ‘patches’ in the book where unusual detail is offered on particular themes, be they coffee bars, curtseying to the bishop, soirées, Christmas, Scripture in Song or the furnishing of the parsonage. These topics could be subjects on their own, and some of them I have described in detail in other places, but the aim of the book is to set them in a cultural tradition, in a stream of development. I hope, further, that some of the other stories which I touch on will be picked up by others, who can test my arguments, and hopefully give them additional value.

The argument of this book is that understanding religious culture is highly desirable for our understanding of New Zealand society and culture as a whole. A history of the culture of New Zealand Christianity is not a history of its political significance, organisational developments, or social impact. Each of these is important, and superb recent writing has highlighted all these themes, but the lack of an understanding of the culture of New Zealand church life is evident in a number of contexts. For example, religion is regularly dismissed as of no significance because its impact was largely in the private sphere. Yet historians have repeatedly identified the importance of the private sphere. Religion sat partly in the private sphere — and indeed is a critical part of it for some people — and gaining an understanding of this ought to unlock explanations for many aspects of society and culture, including music, literacy, cultural memory, class consciousness, family formation and gender identity.

I am by no means the first to work in these areas, and I am immensely grateful to

friends and colleagues who have contributed so much to my understanding. In some fields I simply summarise their fine work, and seek to give the credit where credit is due. I would particularly mention Geoff Troughton, Allan Davidson, Chris van der Krogt, the late Hugh Laracy, Martin Sutherland, Stuart Lange, Laurie Guy, Noel Derbyshire, Margaret McClure, Hugh Morrison, Janet Crawford, John Stenhouse and Alison Clarke. I am very appreciative of various archives where I found documents and photographs. I also particularly mention the Grey Lynn Group, which has met in my house once a month for nearly two decades, trading historical and theological stories. Also, so many students over the years have enhanced my understanding of specific topics as they have explored various themes. I hope all can see now that I was listening to their arguments. There are some other aspects where I have found that very little work has been done. My attempt to make sense of the field awaits revision by the new generation of students and researchers.

I have used the anachronistic term 'Anglican' in general to refer to the Church of the Province of New Zealand, and I have used the terms Methodist and Catholic rather freely. Other religious terms are explained in the glossary.

I am a collector of parish histories. These little works are in sheer bulk as common as the histories of schools, and obviously were meaningful to the people who wrote them. In a way I am suggesting that such accounts would do well to focus on this cultural theme; the very best of them have done this very well. Meanwhile I have been delighted to have had an excuse to read so many of them, and to look for what is told, casually and in an off-hand way, which reveals so much about their life and community.